

ANNUAL BOOK NUMBER.

N. A. H. BOOK CO.

Paragraphic Thoughts Upon the Season of Books.

That place that does contain
My books, the best companions, is to me
A glorious court, where hourly I converse
With the old sages and philosophers;
And sometimes, for variety, I confer
With kings and emperors, and weigh
Their counsels.

—Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Elder Brother," Act I, Scene 2.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

Why do people read?

That reminds one of the well-nigh classic epigram that it's easier to ask questions than to answer them. A good enough solution of the problem is that they read for the same reason that they eat when hungry.

Reading is a propensity of the race, grafted in, deep in, during the passage of the centuries.

As to why people write, that is altogether another story. As to why some people write—well, it is beyond comprehension, a puzzle that even the accumulated wisdom of the moderns and ancients, truths arrived at by revelation or logical processes, fails to explain.

They probably write for the same reason that some women wear French heels—they are foolish enough to do it.

After a dip into gingerless generalities, it were well to revert to particular peculiarities.

Another Christmas is almost upon us. Ere another pay day, or ere two or three pay days—if that auspicious event occur once a week—a goodly number of persons will have invested in Xmas gifts. Not a few will have seen a considerable number of their dollars rung up on the cash register in the book stores.

And they will have purchased this year more books of a special and a practical nature than ever before.

This statement is unwarrantable because the publishers are putting out an unusually large number of volumes of the kind, and the publishers, since their business depends upon it, know pretty well where the public taste trends.

Not that the sales of this kind will at all approach the demands for the new fiction, but that there will be an appreciable increase in the number of readers after purely concrete information.

The presses, with much noise of the grinding, and the publishers with much clamor in the advertising, send forth in unending stream, amounting to a torrent in late November and early December, the great mass of books which are summed up as "light literature."

Silent, within all this, in modest covers, there comes the flow of the output from the contemporary thinkers—they that appeal to the intellectual authority in poetry, essays, philosophy, science. These books have hardly the "holiday color." They are almost lost in what may be called "The Riot of the Novels." Some of them are put on the market at Christmas time, but the increase in their number over other seasons is not large.

Still, they are with us and if you ask the man, he'll find them for you.

Illustrating is about the only department of the pictorial art that is developed to a high point in the United States.

The public seems disposed to pay, and pay well, for genuinely good "picture books." This fall has given us many good ones, which it is unnecessary to mention by name since the book store men will have them so prominently displayed that you may not avoid the opportunity to take your pick.

Of novels, there are novels and then some.

As to their kind, and as to the quality of some of them, lengthy reference has been made upon the inside pages of this issue of The Republic's Annual Book Number.

Good things there are aplenty of the lighter forms of writings now being served to reader. Accordingly, it may not be out of place to venture a prefatory "kno."

Nine-tenths of the publications have been used in one of the various magazines and have upon them the "magazine" stamp.

A certain class of matter is used by each magazine of consequence, with the result that the work writers follow certain lines of "availability." We feel a paucity of books that have in them something that the author had in him and was impelled to write down.

There is a painful predominance of the literary ability which learns the mechanics of story-building and word usage, and which manipulates those accomplishments to put out merely passable tales or novels. Not many writers show in their endeavors that they themselves are really convinced that they have anything worth while to say.

H. M.

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